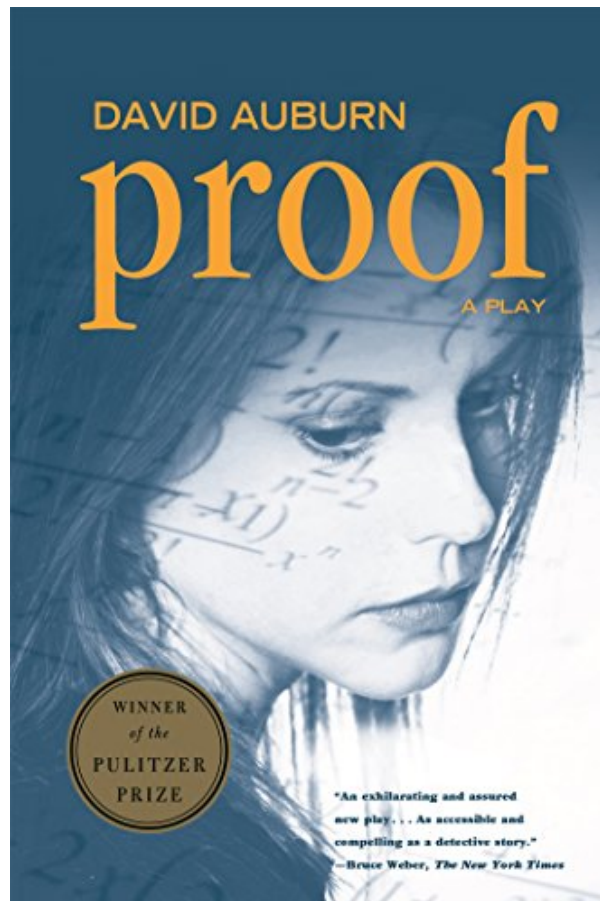
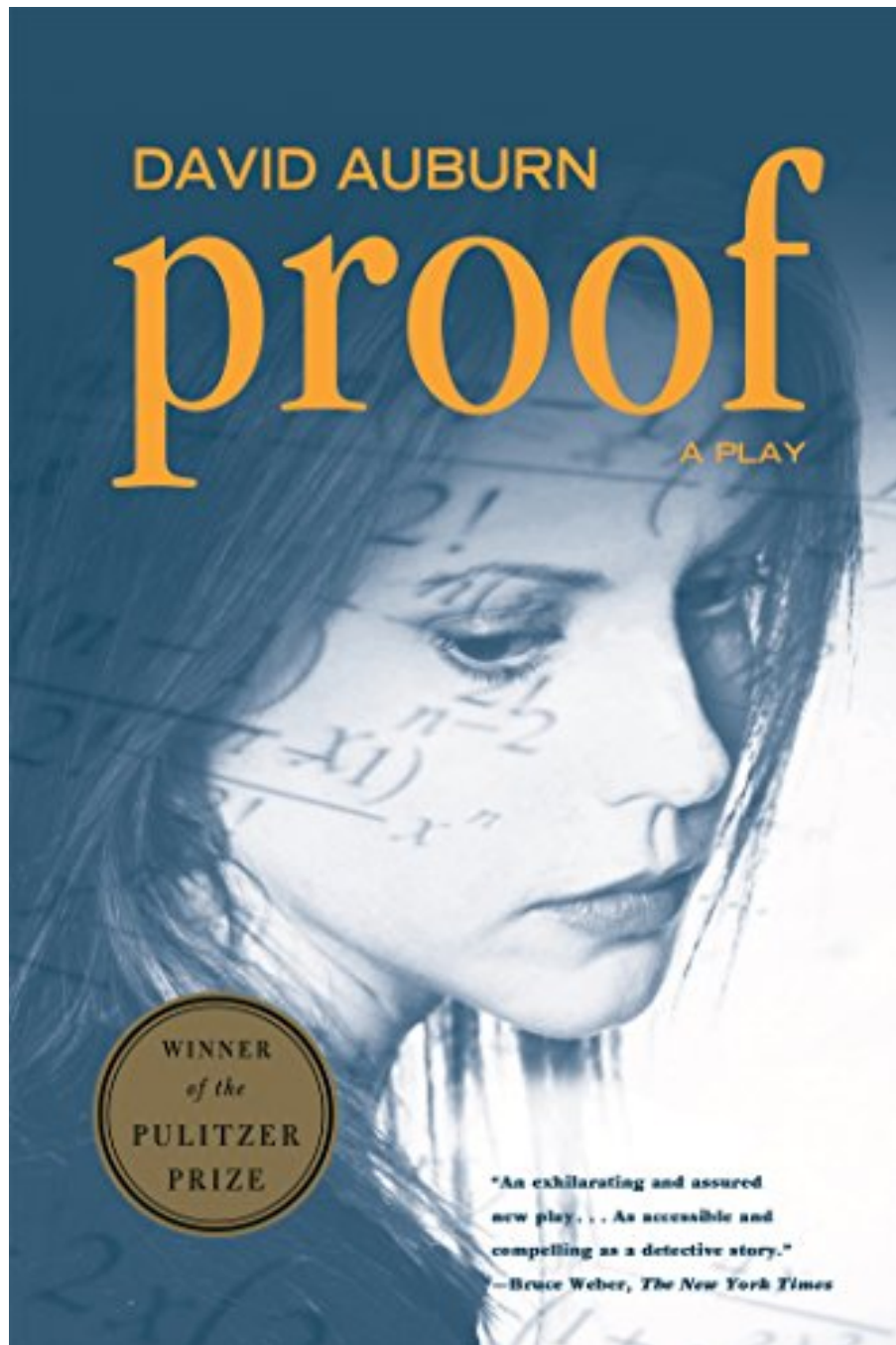


PROOF: A PLAY BY DAVID AUBURN



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PROOF: A PLAY BY DAVID AUBURN PDF

Proof is the winner of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

One of the most acclaimed plays of the 1999-2000 season, Proof is a work that explores the unknowability of love as much as it does the mysteries of science.

It focuses on Catherine, a young woman who has spent years caring for her father, Robert, a brilliant mathematician in his youth who was later unable to function without her help. His death has brought into her midst both her sister, Claire, who wants to take Catherine back to New York with her, and Hal, a former student of Catherine's father who hopes to find some hint of Robert's genius among his incoherent scribbles. The passion that Hal feels for math both moves and angers Catherine, who, in her exhaustion, is torn between missing her father and resenting the great sacrifices she made for him. For Catherine has inherited at least a part of her father's brilliance -- and perhaps some of his instability as well. As she and Hal become attracted to each other, they push at the edges of each other's knowledge, considering not only the unpredictability of genius but also the human instinct toward love and trust.

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Most helpful customer reviews

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Takes Me Back to the Walter Kerr Theater

By Timothy Haugh

In the past few years there has been a resurgence of plays with themes centered around math and science and characters who are mathematicians and scientists. Thank heaven! Michael Frayn's "Copenhagen" is magnificent. Then there are two plays produced by the Manhattan Theater Club: "An Experiment with an Air Pump" by Shelagh Stephenson and this play, "Proof" by David Auburn. I think both are wonderful.

After winning the Pulitzer, a shot at a Tony, and a continuing run on Broadway, Auburn really has no need for my good words; however, let me give a few anyway. This is a cleverly written piece. Unlike "Copenhagen," this play really isn't about mathematicians and scientists. It is just framed around them. No math skills are necessary to enjoy this play. Instead, it is an examination of love, trust, madness and genius presented through the lives of mathematicians.

In fact, the only weakness in this play is when real mathematics comes up. I cringed when I heard the famous exchange between mathematicians G.H. Hardy and Srinivasa Ramanujan put in the mouth of Robert and

Catherine, the father/daughter mathematicians at the heart of this play. It just rubbed me the wrong way. Fortunately, this is the only time math actually comes up. Instead, this play takes us into the lives of four very interesting people. I was fortunate enough to see a performance of this play on its second night on Broadway. I was incredibly moved. Mary-Louise Parker's performance as Catherine was particularly impressive. Reading the script, I was carried right back to the theater and could relive the experience again. I loved it.

35 of 41 people found the following review helpful.

A CHALLENGING, ENTERTAINING PLAY

By A Customer

Not since David Hirson's brilliant *La Bete* and *Wrong Mountain* has Broadway seen a more exciting play than *Proof!* I recommend this book to anyone who appreciates theatre that is as challenging as it is entertaining. I sent many friends to see the original production, and none was disappointed.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant, and yet...

By Ambergold

Proof, by David Auburn, is a compelling and tautly beautiful play, ringing with a quiet elegance. Winner of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the 2001 Tony Award for Best Play, I was introduced to it through the 2005 movie, which now having read the play I realize was an extremely good adaptation, as well as a very good film in its own right. It's the story of Catherine, a brilliant but somewhat neurotic mathematics student who has lived all her life in the shadow of her famous father, a groundbreaking mathematician revered the world over. The play begins with a dialogue between Catherine and her father, in which he berates her for wasting her potential, while gradually, during the course of it, we discover that her father is insane, and has been for quite some time. He is living in semi-seclusion while Catherine looks after him. Then, as the conversation goes on, we - and Catherine - realize that her father is dead; as he calmly informs her "Heart failure. Quick. The funeral's tomorrow." From there, we are slowly sucked into a drama of at once deep intensity and lyrical lightness. Abruptly deprived of the man who, for better or worse, was the center of her existence for all her life, Catherine finds herself having to cope with life and relationships beyond her father, as Harold, a graduate student of her father's, begins going through all her father's journals to see if by some chance he wrote anything significant during his recent years of insanity. Catherine, immediately defensive and certain that her father wrote nothing but graphomaniac scribbles during the last few years, throws him out of the house. Claire is the fourth person in this coterie, Catherine's domineering, overly-careful sister, who ran out on both her father and Catherine years ago(although supporting them financially) and is now determined to drag her "troubled" little sister back with her to New York and fix her up. As half the story is told in flashbacks to scenes between Catherine and her father when he was still alive, these make up the four main characters.

Three of the four main characters are mathematicians, and while there is little or no actual math in the play it is still a mathematicians dream(in much the same way *Possession* is a poet's/writer's dream). One of the many funny moments of the play consists of Hal's band playing a song composed entirely of silence, based on the imaginary number "I", a mathematician's joke.

Proof is a tale of many things; isolation, loneliness, love, hate, the clashing of wildly different characters from different worlds(Harold, more often called Hal, belongs to a band, and Catherine's sister doesn't understand math), and the love-hate relationships engendered within families. But mostly, it is about the quest for genius to find security and definition in a world untailed for fragile people, and to set free the impulse that drives that genius. *Proof* has an oddly breathless feel at times; as if both Catherine and her burgeoning talent hang in the balance between existence and destruction. In an blending of poetry, prose, and math, we discover her fate, of which the following passage(one of several turning points in the play) is a

perfect example -

"Let X equal the cold. It is cold in December. The months of cold equal November through February. There are four months of cold and four of heat, leaving four months of indeterminate temperature. ...Let X equal the month of full bookstores. The number of books approaches infinity as the number of months of cold approaches four. I will be as cold now as I will in the future. The future of cold is infinite. The future of cold is the future of heat..."

Still, while Proof is a remarkable and luminous work, somehow it lacks something - the immensity of vision that I would expect from a Pulitzer-Prize-winning play. It is essentially about individuals, not ideas, and while to some extent this is true of all great literature, still Proof feels small, constrained within its own eclectic world. And there is no great tragedy, love story, or revelation about human nature to make up for this, to dominate it and lift it into a book that says something, a book that will join the pantheon of great literature. It has depth but not width. It's graceful and beautiful, clever and often funny - certainly memorable - but it is not an important work.

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